

# Romans 5:12-21

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[ 0 : 00 ] We're in the Romans, if you've been here a number of weeks. I wonder if you had one person to choose, who would be the biggest influence in history?

! Who would be the person who you think had the biggest influence in history? This man-pulled Michael Hart wrote a book of the 50 most influential people in 1978 and re-issued it in 1994. Let me give you his top five.

Number five was Confucius. Number four, Buddha. Number three, Jesus Christ. Number two, Isaac Newton. Number one, Muhammad.

He thought that Muhammad had more influence on his followers than the Lord Jesus. But according to Paul, the second most influential man in history was Adam. Adam, interestingly enough, didn't make it onto Michael Hart's 50 most influential people at all.

I wonder whether it would make it onto your list. But he is the first man in the Garden of Eden, and his influence should not be underestimated. If you are not a Christian, the man that has shaped your life more than anyone else is Adam.

[ 1 : 08 ] And if you are a Christian, the only person who has had a greater influence on your life than that first man, Adam, is Jesus Christ himself. And so the passage which Donald read to us, you will see that there are those two men that come up again and again.

It's the most influential people in the world, Adam and Jesus Christ. Rather than working through the section, I want to look at the two men spending more of our time on Adam this lunchtime.

But I think his influence is probably less familiar to us. Why does it matter that you come to terms with the first man, Adam? Because actually he is the key.

He's the key to why our lives are in the mess that they are. He's the key to why the world is in a mess. He's the key to why you and I struggle with death and sin.

And in many ways, understanding Adam helps us to understand what Jesus has done. And what he's done for us is so staggeringly wonderful. So in chapters 1-5, let me recap.

[ 2 : 14 ] Paul begins with, doesn't he, his passion about the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he's passionate about the gospel because it is God's power to salvation for everyone who believes.

So why do we need saving? Why do we need rescuing? Well, chapters 1-3 unpack the problem. We are all under God's judgment because of our sin. Chapter 3, verse 21 onwards in the gospel, God has provided a way for unrighteous men and women, boys and girls, to get right with him. And the solution we've seen is 100% from God and 0% from us. It is by grace alone, through faith alone, and not by works.

And so the first half of chapter 5, if we trust in Christ, we saw last week we can be sure that we are accepted by God this afternoon. And we have nothing to fear in the judgment to come.

Our passage begins, doesn't it, with that famous word, therefore. What's the link with what's gone on before? Well, in chapter 5, verse 9, it's stated, Christ died for us. But how can what one man so long ago have any effect on my life today?

[ 3 : 25 ] Well, today's passage presents us with a comparison of these two most influential men in history. So, first of all, Adam and the reign of sin and death.

The passage repeats one word again and again, isn't it? One. One particular sin committed by one particular individual. Look at verse 16. Look down with me.

One man's sin. And one trespass. Verse 17, it speaks of one trespass. Verse 18, one trespass. Verse 19, one man's disobedience. Well, that one man is Adam. And that one sin it's referring to here is that famous account, isn't it? That act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, where he took of the fruit that he was forbidden to eat by God.

And that one man's sin, that one man's disobedience, has affected the whole of the world ever since. Incidentally, the comparison between Adam and Jesus Christ, it makes it very clear, doesn't it?

[ 4 : 31 ] That Adam was an historical person. He was as much of a historical person as the Lord Jesus it was. And his act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden was real.

And it was an historical event. Just as historical as the death of Jesus Christ was. The account of Adam is not safe. It is history. Adam was the first man.

And his act of obedience was an event. If you had been there, you could have recorded it on your mobile phone and sent it to your friends. And so Adam messed up. So what? So what?

Surely, it's in the midst of time. Why should I care in the middle of Eden, in this half-term, about what some bloke did in his back garden? I mean, it's his business, isn't it? But actually, this passage tells us it's our business.

Every single one of us who have ever lived have been affected by that one man's sin. Just look at how the passage explains the universal effect of the sin. Look at verse 12.

[ 5 : 30 ] It says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin. So death spread to all men, because all sinned. Then verse 14. Yet death reigned from Adam, even over those whose sinning was not unlike the transgression of Adam.

Verse 15. But the free gift is not like the trespass. Verse 16. And the free gift is not the result of one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation.

Again in verse 17. It's all over the place, isn't it? For if because of one man's trespass. Verse 18. Therefore one trespass led to condemnation for all men.

Verse 19. For as by one man's disobedience to the men, he were made sinners. Again and again in the passage. He repeats it. So emphasize it. Because of what Adam did, sin and death have entered the world.

And when sin and death entered the world, they didn't go and rent a flat in Acton and keep to themselves. No, sin and death took over. Sin and death took control and they reigned.

[ 6 : 35 ] Do you see that in verse 14? Can you see that? Death reigned. Verse 17. Death reigned. Verse 21. Sin reigned in death.

You might not be very fond of Theresa May or David Cameron as Prime Minister. But just imagine the situation where the Mafia was in charge. Or imagine the Cray twins.

Those who are old enough to remember them. Imagine they were in power. This passage says we know what it's like to live under the reign of sin and death. Everyone sins. Everyone is born spiritually dead.

Everyone is headed for the grave. Sin and death rule. And the news channels and the newspapers give us a daily update of the effects of their rule.

People of North Korea and Zimbabwe, they've suffered much under cruel dictators. But all of us, without exception, have suffered from the cruel tyranny of sin and death.

[ 7 : 34 ] And all this mess can be traced back to one act by one man. The trail leads to the door of that one man, Adam. The first man he's got a lot to answer for. You can see why Adam has got a legitimate claim up there, isn't he?

To be the most influential people in history. But how can one man sin thousands of years ago? What's the connection between him and you sitting here today?

And this is very important. Isn't it just that each one of us happens to have made the same mistake as Adam? Did we just kind of blow it in the same way that he did?

Do we all just follow the same pattern? Are we born sinless as Adam and then we go on to fall into the same trap of disobeying God? And so we reap the same circumstances.

Is that it? Well if so, how do all of us make the same mistake without exception? Isn't that a bit odd? That we make exactly the same mistake without exception? Why does every human being, without exception, sin and die?

[ 8 : 37 ] Why is that? Well back in the early 5th century there was a controversy that erupted in the church. Two individuals were involved. One was a man called Augustine of Hippo.

African man. And another, a British guy called Pelagius. And contrary to Augustine, Pelagius taught that Adam's sin, Adam's sin had no impact on his offspring. Pelagius, the British man, taught that all peoples are born sinless.

They are morally capable of obeying God and doing good. And the people only sin through deliberate actions. Well his teaching was condemned as heretical.

At the Council of Carthage in 418. Essentially he was denying what has become known as the doctrine of original sin. Now let me explain that to you. When we often say, preachers say original sin.

People often think, ah that must be the first sin that was committed, original sin. But that isn't right. Original sin refers to the guilt and the tendency to sin which each of us is born with.

[ 9 : 40 ] And so original sin is something that every single one of us suffer from. And because the term is often misunderstood. People often speak of inherited sin which is the same thing.

So the sin which is ours as a result of what Adam did has two parts to it. The sin which we inherit has two parts. Inherited guilt and inherited corruption.

Inherited guilt is there in the start of the first half of verse 18. Therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all men. So one act of righteousness leads to justification of life for all men.

For as by one man's disobedience the many were made sinners. Now those phrases seem to be saying that we are condemned as sinners in God's sight because of Adam's sin.

So there is a direct link. Why are we all condemned by God? Because of the one trespass of the one man. One man. Why are we all sinners in God's sight?

[ 10 : 43 ] Well because of the one man's disobedience. Because his act of disobedience. All people are born sinful in God's sight. Even before we actually commit sins ourselves. So what are we saying?

What we're saying is we inherit Adam's guilt. And that makes sense in verse 13 doesn't it? For sin indeed was in the world before the law was given. But sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses. Even those who were sinning was not unlike the transgression of Adam. Can you understand that? If the sins people committed weren't counted by God before the law was given to Moses.

Why did people die? The wages of sin is death. Death is the penalty for sin. But their sins weren't reckoned against them. Well they must have died because of inherited sin.

Because those sins they committed were not reckoned against them. They were still counted as sinners in God's sight. And so they were condemned. If you like all of us sin in Adam.

[ 11 : 50 ] Now when we hear this. I think initially naturally we want to protest. We say this is unfair. This seems so unfair what Paul is teaching. But there's two points to bear in mind.

At the judgment on the last day. We will all be held accountable for our actual sins. For the things we've committed. The principle in the Bible is that people are judged according to what they have done.

And secondly. It's worth bearing in mind. If you are a Christian this afternoon. You are counted by God as righteous. Not because of what you have done.

But because of what Christ has done for you. Is that also unfair? It's the same principle in verse 19.

Can you notice that? For as by one man's disobedience to the man who has been made sinners.

So by the one man's obedience to the man who has been made righteous. Adam our first representative. He sinned. And God counted as guilty. And Christ the representative is the one who is the representative of all who believe.

[ 12 : 52 ] And he obeyed God perfectly. And God counted him as righteous. And all those in him. So the first part of our inheritance from Adam is this inherited guilt.

But the second part is referred to often as inherited corruption. We are born not just sinners in God's sight. But also we are born with a sinful nature.

We are born with a disposition to sin. Psalm 51 verse 5. I was brought forth in iniquity. And in sin my mother conceived me. Mark Psalm 21.

Jesus says it's from within. And out of men and women's hearts come evil thoughts and sexual immorality and so on. It comes from inside us. There are the computer virus.

I just sit on PC so I seem to get them every six months. But computer viruses, they're out there aren't they? On the net. And sometimes those viruses get through the defences. And they affect your computer and they delete files.

[ 13 : 54 ] And they damage your hard drive and so on. But in the case of human beings. Every new computer comes out of the box with the deadly sin virus in their system.

Inherited guilt. Inherited corruption. Why is it so important to grasp this? Well this diagnosis of human beings. The human predicament. It focuses on how serious it is. But it tells you and I and everyone else we are not basically good. No one will be accepted by God for living a sort of decent life. Even before we committed our very first sin. We were sinners with a sinful nature. And once we started sinning the floodgates opened. We cannot save ourselves. The diagnosis gives us a reality check about children. However cute and however delightful a newborn baby may be.

[14:51] And they are delightful. When you hold a newborn baby you are holding in your arms a sinner. With a sinful nature. And as a father of three young children let me assure you it doesn't take very long to show itself.

They are sinners who need saving. They are not little angels. Who carry inside. Well they carry inside themselves a disposition for sin.

The Westminster Confession of Faith speaks of being utterly indisposed. Disabled. And made opposite to all good. And wholly inclined to all evil.

It's so striking isn't it? When you see that of yourself. Well that will impact how you view other people. And the reason the passage speaks so much about Adam is to show us how glorious the Lord Jesus is.

But in the end of verse 14. It speaks of Adam as a type of the one who is to come. In a sense he is a pattern of Christ. There is a close parallel between the two men.

[15:50] And if you go to 1 Corinthians 15.45 it speaks of the first Adam. And the last Adam. And Romans 5 compares the two. Have you ever had to write an exam?

You know the compare and contrast. Compare and contrast Hamlet with Macbeth. Well here is a compare and contrast with Adam and Jesus. And the comparison is in verse 12.

Therefore just the sin came into the world through one man speaking of Adam. And what you'd expect there is he'd finish that sentence. He'd finish the comparison. But he doesn't actually do that until verse 18.

And in between verses 12 to 14. Paul explains what was the effect of Adam's sin. And then in verses 15 to 17 he stresses that Adam and Christ are not alike.

And then he gets to the comparison in verse 18. Therefore as one trespass led to condemnation for all man. And so one act of righteousness leads to justification for all man. Do you see the parallel?

[16:51] The one man and his action has results for all people. One act of righteousness in which Jesus Christ died for us.

The one man's obedience in Jesus. Who obeyed the Father's will. And died in our place. That has result for all those in him.

Do you see this parallel with Adam? It actually helps us doesn't it? To understand the scale. And the magnitude of what Jesus has done for us. What he has done.

That Jesus died to deal with all the effects of Adam's sin. He came to overthrow the reign of sin and death. It's the most significant events in history. They are the pivots on which history and eternity turn.

One writer said history has got two key points. History has got two key points. One the action of Adam in the garden. And the second the action of Jesus Christ upon the cross.

[17:54] And everything else is just footnotes. Do you see this parallel helps us understand how the death of one man 2,000 years ago can have an impact upon you today. Just as Adam's action brought results for all those he represented.

For all mankind. So Christ's actions have brought results for all those he represented. But when we run the comparison we see that there are glorious contrasts out there.

Look at verse 16. Following one trespass brought condemnation. But the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. Adam brought condemnation.

Christ brought justification. Another result. Adam's act resulted in sin and death. But Christ's act in verse 21. At the end of the passage. Resulted in.

Eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Grace now reigns. Not sin. It's saying isn't it. A new reign has begun.

[19:00] Already. Through our Lord Jesus Christ. In the midst of this world of sin and death. The reign of grace and eternal life have begun. The clock is counting down.

On the old rulers of sin and death. Their time is almost up. The reign of grace and life will be the end of verse 21. Eternal life. In fact verse 17 speaks of believers themselves.

Reigning in life through one man in Christ Jesus. In work. In sport. In politics. A person is judged on their results. And judged on these results.

Jesus wins all the awards. He brought justification in the place of condemnation. The reign of grace and life. In place of the reign of sin and death. I want to finish just showing you how much greater Christ is than Adam.

Look at verse 15. Do you see what it says? For if many died through one man's trespass. Much more have the grace of God. And the free gift by grace.

[ 20 : 01 ] Of that one man. Christ Jesus Christ abounded for many. Or verse 17. Death reigned through that one more. Much more will those who receive the abundance of grace.

And free gift of righteousness reign in life. Verse 20 it says. The law came in. Sin increased. But grace abounded all the more. Any old fool can bring in sin and death.

I can do that. But what Christ has done is he has brought life and justification. No one else could ever have done that. Think of it this way. What is more powerful?

Somebody who shoots and kills a person. Or someone who raises a person from death to life. What Jesus Christ has done is infinitely more wonderful and powerful than what Adam did.

And Jesus has done what no one else could do. Jesus has done what the law could not do in verse 20. The law of Moses. The Ten Commandments were never intended to undo what Adam did.

[ 21 : 01 ] They never had the power to overthrow the reign of sin and death. Actually the law brought the increase of sin. Once you've had a written command you know what you're breaking don't you?

You cannot tackle the reign of sin and death by attempting to keep the Ten Commandments. By doing better. Christ alone can liberate you from sin and death. Well where does this leave us?

One of the most popular hobbies in the UK is researching your family tree isn't it? You know that program Who Do You Think You Are? Have you done your family tree? It can be interesting can't it?

But it doesn't really matter in the end whether you've got a family tree or not does it? But this family tree in Romans 5 matters. It shows us that every single one of us are descended from Adam.

He is there in my family history. And because of this ancestor we are all sinners heading for judgment. But Romans 5 draws another family tree.

[ 22 : 01 ] A family tree of a new race and a new humanity. It's descended from the second Adam. The man Christ Jesus. And we are related to him not by physical birth.

Not by keeping the Ten Commandments. But by faith. Because faith is the door that opens the door to heaven. The key that opens the door to heaven. And so the question is.

Is your name on Jesus' family tree? And if it is. Give thanks. Give thanks greatly. But if it's not.

You have an opportunity. Not only to research your family tree. But to change it this afternoon. By putting your faith. Your hope. In the Lord Jesus Christ. And your name can be written in.

And you can become part of the new humanity. And you can receive this righteousness, grace and eternal life. That comes through the one man. Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 23 : 01 ] Let's pray.